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Fulbright Fellowship to Israel inspires dance production

As an alumna of Alonzo King LINES Ballet BFA in Dance at Dominican and the founder of a local dance company, Casey Lee Thorne '10 returned from a powerful Fulbright Post-Graduate Student Fellowship to Israel with a greater appreciation for the knowledge and expertise that she can provide.

“Everything that I learned at Dominican has been valuable in shaping who I am as a person and as result has shaped the work that I create and how I conduct myself with people everywhere,” Casey says. “This program is so special in terms of what we are doing with ballet. Ballet is not taught like this in the rest of the world. When you go to another place you start to recognize that you actually have something to offer that is incredibly valuable and sought after.”

Casey and her company – Inside Out Contemporary Ballet -- in association with the [BFA in Dance program at Dominican](#) presented *If I Were You – Project Israel* in the Angelico Concert Hall on October 3.

BFA in Dance alums Brittany Hernandez, Yoshie Fujimoto Kateada, Maddie Matuska, Linda Steele, and Samantha Anton danced in the production, and DU alumna Lisa Boling Huntsman created the set design.

The full-length contemporary ballet performance featured Casey’s research from one-year of traveling, teaching, and conversing with diverse populations in Israel and Occupied Palestine. She collected hundreds of written reflections in several different languages from individuals young and old about what dancing connects them to. These written reflections were used to craft a large-scale set installation that encompasses the performance space, and inspires the generation of all choreographic material for *If I Were You – Project Israel*.

“The premise is that we can come to have an understanding of the ‘other’ through dance. We are using imaginative empathy to step inside the dancing shoes of another person,” Casey explains. “Suddenly, you can feel the beautiful parts of that human’s spirit and their capacity to express their fears and hopes and dreams. The creative process of dancing together is really where the healing can happen.”

What Casey discovered during her fellowship in affiliation with the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance is how eager dance students in Israel were to learn ballet from a contemporary perspective. There were no grassroots choreographers like Casey focusing on contemporary ballet in the region.

“Everyone wanted me to teach ballet and everyone loved it,” she says. “I have to go back there to teach. I have to offer my craft. They want it so badly and can’t have enough of it.”

The memories of the wide-eyed students who touched Casey and the reflections she collected for *If I Were You - Project Israel* resonate within her. She shared her research at the October 3 performance at Dominican and two more performances are scheduled at ODC Commons in San Francisco October 10-11. She also plans to share her Fulbright experience through various workshops and lectures such as the Osher Marin JCC event in San Rafael at 7 p.m. on November 12.

“The creation of *If I Were You – Project Israel* as a performance piece is the icing on the cake,” Casey says. “It’s a very process-oriented project.”

To watch a video of Casey’s Fulbright Student Fellowship experience or for ticket information, visit the [Inside Out Contemporary Ballet](#) website.

September 3, 2015